

LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER REGION FIGURINES:
A POSSIBLE CULTURAL INDICATOR FOR THE
NORTHWEST.

Robert G. Slocum

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INTRODUCTION

This paper has a two-fold purpose: First, to present basic information on the recent discovery of clay figurines from the Herzeg Site in southwestern Washington (45-C1-4), and to describe some of the major specimens in relation to the characteristics noted.

Second: to present a comparison of the Herzeg figurines and similar figurines from the Lower Columbia area in relation to figurines from adjacent areas of the Northwest and other selected cultures of the West in an effort to establish a cultural relationship.

A brief resume of previously reported sites has been included for the purpose of establishing spatial occurrence of figurines and to point up the current state of evidence, or lack of evidence, concerning clay figurines from the surrounding areas.

No attempt has been made to discuss techniques of manufacture other than those specifically important in the creation of form and design. Nor has any reference been made to the purpose or function of the figurine, a subject upon which many divergent ideas have been expressed.

FIGURINE RECORDS

To seriously consider the cultural relationships of clay figurines, one must be aware of what has been found and what has been said in the past, so for these reasons I am including a brief summary of as many reports and locations as could be found and that may have a bearing on the Lower Columbia area.

Sarsi: According to Dr. L. Spier, the Sarsi, an Athabascan speaking tribe on the Upper Columbia in Canada, used fired clay for pipes, pots and molded images for children's toys. (Ray, 1932)

Sanpeil: Clay was used for making heads for children's dolls and were attached to bodies of tule and, at a later date, to bodies of cloth. (Ray, 1932)

McNary Reservoir: During the River Basin Surveys of the McNary Reservoir, Douglas Osborne found and described a single piece of tabular clay with an inscribed "pine tree" design. (Osborne, 1957a, Fig. 2a)

Miller's Island: W.D. Strong et al, pictured three pieces of clay which were excavated during 1924-26 at the Site 19. He refers to these pieces as "argillaceous clay pencils" due to the red pigment and general shape. Two (Pl. 11 g, i) are undoubtedly the lower portions of clay figurines. (Strong, Schenk, Steward 1930)

Wakemap Mound: Numerous figurines have been reported

from this mound and undoubtedly many more exist, unreported, in private collections. One characteristic all reported figurines have in common is "wedge-shaped" impressions, the figurine heads being the exception. One figurine is reported by Strong (1930); two by Caldwell (1956); four by Osborne (1957 b); and five by Butler (1965).

5 Mile Site: This site, excavated by Cressman in 1953, is one of the Early Man sites from which a head and two tabular artifacts were reported. The tabular objects, while they bear little resemblance to most other figurines, do have "wedge - shaped" impressions. (Cressman, 1960; Butler, 1965)

Sara, Washington: Pendergast (1957) describes two fragmentary clay figurines of triangular form from this area. Both are marked with the "wedge-shaped" impressions. Bryan (1959 a) also described three figurines found near Sara, Wn. from the Harold Keethe collection. The two unfired figurines are comparable to those described from 45-C1-4 and the third is dissimilar in that the "pine tree" rib motif is present.

Felida Landing (45-C1-6): Seventy-seven figurines and fragmentary pieces from the Raymond Hofferber collection, an unreported collection, were studied for comparative purposes. Each of these figurines was found

to have a counterpart among the Cl-4 specimens. Over 70 % of the specimens from Cl-6 are marked with the "wedge shaped" impressions and pigment and shell inlays were found on many of the pieces.

Other locations, not on the Columbia River, from which clay figurines have been described and could have a possible bearing on the Lower Columbia area are included in the following records.

Pistol River: Two bear-shaped figurines (Pl.19h,i) were described by E.Heflin (1966) from a site in Southwestern Oregon on the Pistol River. He also pictures fired clay pipes from the same area (Pl.3a,b)

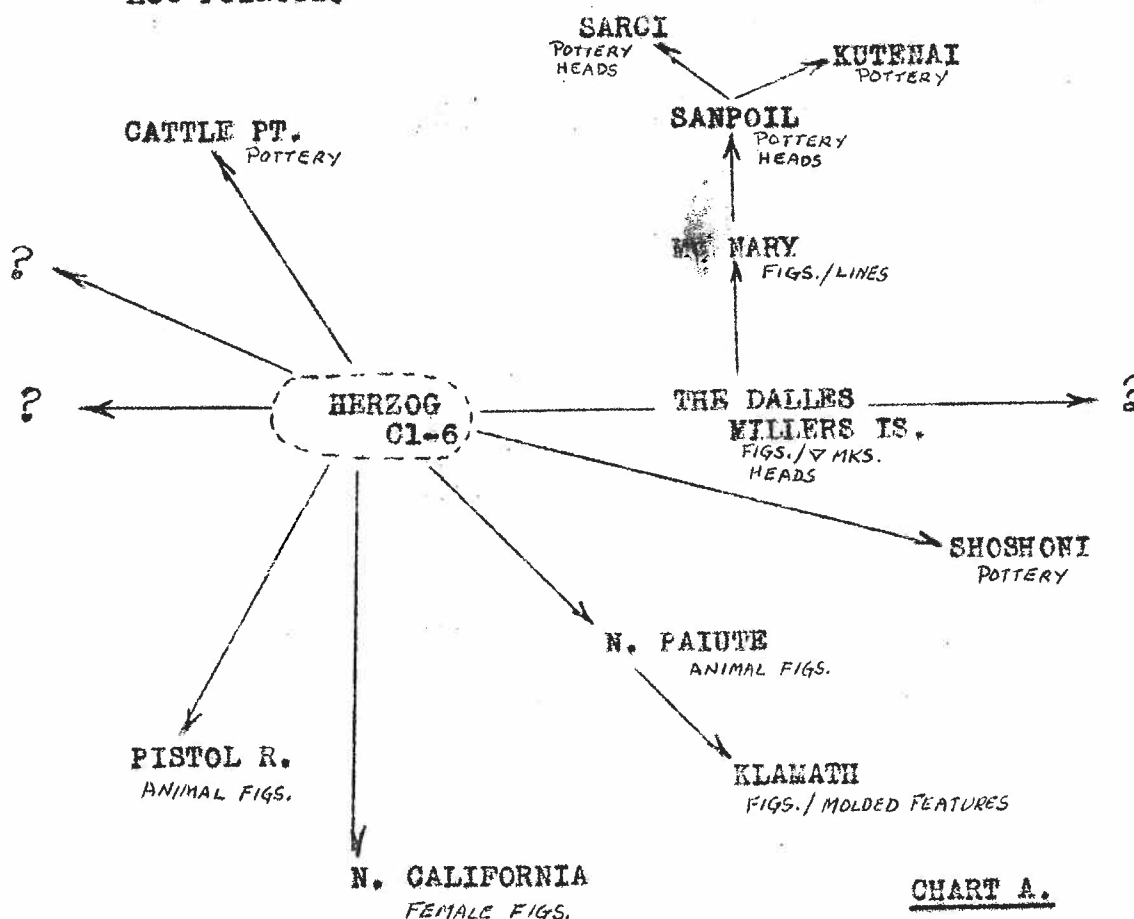
Northern California (4-Hum-67): Heizer and Pendergast (1954) describe a series of female figurines from the Humboldt Bay Site in Northern California.(Pl.62a,c,d,g)(Pl.63) Cheveron designs and dot punctuations are common markings upon these figurines.

Klamath, Northern Paiute & Shoshoni: Dr. L.Spier states that these tribes used clay in the manufacture of pots and pipe bowls. In addition, the Northern Paiute produced figures representing horses and other animals and the Klamath made little girl's dolls with molded eyes, nose and mouth which are "not dressed". (Ray,1932) The Shoshoni produced a "flower pot" shaped pottery which Osborne relates to that of the Kutenai and the

Sarci to the north. (Osborne 1957 b)

Cattle Point: This site on the San Juan Islands produced three bowls of fired clay whose form and method of manufacture, Osborne relates to the Sanpoil to the east.

Much data from other localities, such as the Hinckley figurines of Utah; the Basketmaker III figurines from north-eastern Arizona; most of the Central and Southern California figurines and the South Western ceramics, have been omitted on the basis of geographical and distance barriers that exist and because of the relatively sound proof and acceptability by prominent anthropologists that they are not related.



INTRODUCTION OF HERZOG FIGURINES

History

While it is in doubt as to whether 45-C1-4 is the specific site from which the Shoto Indians came when they met and talked with Lewis and Clark on Sunday, March 30, 1806, it is one of several village sites located in the correct area on Lake River. (Coeus, 1893) It is probable that the inhabitants of this area either died or moved away during the Indian epidemics of the 1830s. Many early accounts of this area tell of the terrible toll of life taken by the "Intermittent Fever" and recall that "unburied bones bleaching in the sand" were common. It has been estimated that, on Suavie's Island, the mortality rate approached 100 percent. (Streng, 1960) By the time the White Man arrived on the Lower Columbia in significant numbers, many of the Indian tribes were greatly reduced or extinct and those remaining were wretched examples of the once proud people.

Early Archaeologists believed that the Northwest in general was almost devoid of clay artifacts as stated in some of the early reports which made mention of articles of clay manufacture. An early report by Edward Sapir on Sarcee Pottery was published in 1923; clay used in making Sanpoil doll heads was excavated by V.F. Ray in 1924 and published in 1932; and W.D. Streng found figurines on Miller's Island in 1924 and published in 1930. Since that

time, less than twenty-five clay artifacts have been reported upon from the Lower Columbia area.

Area Description

The collection referred to in the introduction is from the Herzog Site(45-C1-4), a historic site on Lake River which is a tributary of the Columbia. This site was excavated during 1964-66 by the Oregon Archaeology Society and all materials are retained by its members.

Lake River is a small, slough-like stream which connects Vancouver Lake to the Columbia River at a point approximately ten miles downstream. It flows through the broad, alluvial plain formed by the Columbia River which is seven to eight miles wide in this area and is framed by foothills on the east and west. The Columbia River is approximately one and one-half miles distant to the west as it flows from south to north and parallel to Lake River. This area, which is quite low and susceptible to flooding, has a rich, silty soil that is extensively farmed. The region is noted for its abundance of waterfowl and fish, especially salmon, and small game are plentiful. Large game, such as deer and elk, were numerous in earlier days as evidenced by the number of bone remains found in the site. Even today, Wapato, a staple diet of the Indians of this area, is found growing in the marshy lands near the site of C1-4.

Figurine Descriptions

Sixty-one figurines and figurine fragments were excavated at 45-C1-4 during 1964-66 thus making this the largest and most important single site in the Northwest from the standpoint of establishing trait characteristics of clay figurines for an area.⁽¹⁾ I have selected major items for the purpose of description but have included the total collection for the establishment of characteristics.

Fig. I a. ZB45/2 Figurine head 4.6 cm X 3.3 cm

A sculptured head of dark gray color. The brows, chin, nose and hair are especially well defined. The hair treatment is unique in that it carries over the crown and down the back of the head. The face is almost completely blackened by firing or pigment. This head was excavated at a depth of six feet.

Fig. I b. 0100/2 Figurine head 4.5 cm X 3.2 cm

Similar to Fig. I a. except that it is of a light brown clay with patches of fire blackening. The hair does not extend over the top of the head.

Fig. I c. ZC44/2 Figurine head 3.1 cm X 2.0 cm

A sculptured head with protruding brows and nose. The hair style is typical of many of the carved antler cremation figures from this area. Fingerprints are visible in the clay and the reverse side is unmarked.

Fig. I d. Unknown Figurine 5.5 cm X 2.1 cm X 1.8 cm

A broken figurine of cylindrical form. The hair style is of the familiar form and the nose is an added piece of clay. The head is defined from the body and the eyes are deeply formed slits.

- (1) Two private collections have come to my attention: the R. Hofferber collection of 77 pieces from 45-C1-6 and the S. Fritch collection of 75 pieces from 45-C1-3. Both sites are considered to be Shoto villages.

Fig. I e. 078/2 Figurine 5.8 cm X 1.7 cm X 1.3 cm

This figurine is of gray color and appears to have been fired. Slit eyes and mouth are represented and the added nose is evident. The head is thin and tapered, suggesting the flattened head style of the area. An incised line, suggesting a pendant, is visible. The figure will stand unsupported on the flattened base. The figurine was excavated at the two foot level.

Fig. I f. ZC42/2 Figurine 5.4 cm X 1.7 cm X 1.4 cm

This figure is unfired and of light tan color. It has an unusual cross-hatched hair treatment and the nose, which of added clay, has fallen off leaving a triangular pit. Two small punctations, possibly representing ears, are noted on each side of the head.

Fig. I g. X74/4 Figurine 6.6 cm X 3.5 cm X 1.2 cm

A fired clay figurine of reddish brown color which is typical of many from this site. The eyes, nose and mouth are represented by incised lines and paired lines enclose wedge-shaped impressions in the design. The eyes are slanted as they are on many of the figures. No sexual distinction is noted on this or other figurines from the site. This figure was excavated in the four foot level.

Fig. I h. ZD26/1 Figurine 3.9 cm X 3.0 cm X 1.1 cm

This figurine of light tan clay was found one and one-half feet deep and in the vicinity of a fire pit. Eyes are represented by short incised lines and dashes are enclosed by incised pairs of lines in the common X pattern. Dark areas indicate, at least, partial firing of the figurine.

Fig. I i. ZB34/1 Tabular Figure 3.5 cm X 1.7 cm X .6 cm

A complete figure (figurine) without visible features. The markings are elongated dots in uniform rows and are separated by incised lines. If this figure represents the human form, it indicates an abstract art that must be taken into account when detailing other Indian figurines.

Fig. I j. Tellings Figurine 7.2 cm X 3.4 cm X 1.3 cm

This figurine is unfired and has the eyes, nose and mouth represented. The nose is formed by a triangular piece of shell (River mussel) which has been inlaid into the wet clay. Eight other fragments of shell are found on the piece. Red pigment is noted in the impressions above the face.

Fig. I k,l,m. Fragments

Fig. I k. is the lower portion of a figurine on which rows of dots in a random design have been impressed. Fig. I l. is a fragment which is marked with "horseshoe" impressions. These were probably produced with a broken bird bone which were plentiful in this site. Fig. I m. pictures a ball type clay addition with a circular impression in the center. These were noted on several of the fragments and figurines.

In order to emphasize the relative abundance of the characteristic of form, a chart has been prepared that includes the sixty-one figurines and fragments which were collected at the Herzog Site (45-C1-4).

FIGURINE FORMS

			Totals	
Kite-shaped or Tabular Probable	8	13%		
	35	57%	43	71%
Cylindrical Probable	3	5%		
	4	7%	7	11%
Heads	3	5%	3	5%
Unknown	8	13%	8	13%
			<u>61</u>	<u>100%</u>

CHART B.

DISCUSSION AND CORRELATION

Dating

Prehistorians of the Lower Columbia River sites will encounter the unfortunate disadvantage of not being able to accurately date sites along the river's edge which are flooded annually. The cause is that the Hanford atomic energy plant discharges enough radio-active effluent into the river to make accurate radio-carbon dating extremely difficult, at least under present methods.

For this reason, 45-C1-4 does not have an early occupation date. A terminal date is possible, based upon the contact with Lewis and Clark (Coeur, 1893) and a knowledge of the Epidemics of the early 1830's (Cook, 1955) during which the areas population was nearly decimated. Further proof is found in the very limited amount of Caucasian trade goods which were found in the uppermost levels of the site. From these facts, the terminal date may be safely placed between 1806 and 1835; the latter date probably being nearer the correct answer.

In comparing 45-C1-4 and 35-Mu-9 (a site which is 1½ miles distant on Sauvie's Island), Dr. T.M. Newman estimated that the two sites were contemporaneous. The basis of his statement was a firsthand knowledge of the sites and their artifacts. Mu-9 was tested at Level 4 with a resulting Carbon date of 1165 ± 250 years B.P.

If Dr. Newman's estimate of contemporaneity is accepted, this, then would place C1-4 in the same dating

bracket with Mu-9 and Wakemap Mound, a point which will be recalled in later discussion.

Figurine Types - Cl-4

In observing Cl-4 figurines, it appears that there are two distinct types and possibly three. Type 1 (Pl. I a-c.) is the sculptured head and is the type found in the eldest levels. All of these specimens were found below five feet from the surface. These figurines are very similar to the type found at Wakemap Mound in Level 2-d which was dated between the early 14th. and mid 18th. century. (Butler, 1965 Fig. 2a, b, 3d)

Type 2, the tabular or kite-shaped form, was later, stratigraphically, and was, by far, the most numerous form. This form was found usually above the four feet level and upward to the spot below the surface. Forms with clay applique appeared in the lower part of this strata.

The third type, one characterized by an elongated, cylindrical shape, was found interspersed with the kite-shaped forms. There is no doubt that these figures represent a distinct form but it is questionable as to a basis for temporal difference between the cylindrical and tabular forms. There are possibilities that they may be a transitional form or that they may be the result of an outside influence, coincident with the tabular form.

The following chart is one adapted from Bryan (1959a) which records the evidence of any correlation between the Columbia River and other cultural areas. An additional column of characteristics has been added for the Lower Columbia River which includes material from 45-C1-4 and 45-C1-6 and which would more reliably reflect the characteristics of this area due to the much larger collection of clay artifacts.

x present						
- absent						
R rare	Lower	Col.	Cent.	North.	North.	Bskt.
? questionable	Col.R	River	Calif.	Calif.	Perif.	Mkr.III
	C14/6					
Sex indicator	-	-?	x	x	x	x
female	-	-	x	x	x	x
Limbs - stump legs	-?	?	-	-	R	-
arm holes	R	x	R	-	-	-
Facial features	x	x	-?	-?	x	x
protrusions	x	-	-	-	x	x
puncta. on face	x	x	-	-	-	x
Hair, ornaments, clothing						
applied clay elements	x	-	-	-	x	-
punct. & incis. on body	x	x	?	?	-	x
Headdress (punct. & incis.)	-	x	-	-	-	-
Fired	x	x	x	x	-	-
Unfired	x	x	?	?	x	x
Decorated dorsal aspect	R	x	-	-	-	-
Punct. on body	x	x	x	x	-	x
short line & dot	R	-	x	x	-	x
wedge-shaped	x	x	-	-	-	-
Incisions	x	x	x	x	-	R
straight line	x	x	x	x	-	-
curved line	x	x	?	?	-	-
Fingernail impressions	R	x	-	-	-	-
Schematized "backbone" & "rib" motif	-	x	-	-	-	-

CHART C.

Bryan finds no similarity between the Columbia River and the Basketmaker III or Northern Periphery specimens as demonstrated in his chart. Illustrations from Northern California (Heizer & Pendergast, 1964) and from later publications on Central California (Elsasser, 1963) and even as far north as the Pistol River in Southwestern Oregon (Heflin, 1966) do not appear to connect with the Columbia River figurines from the south.

However, when comparing the Lower Columbia characteristics with Bryan's Columbia River column, a few changes (2) are noted. Independently prepared limbs, attached by pins into arm holes, appear to be rare, at best. Facial protrusions, usually a nose, were found on a few of the Cl-4 figurines. (Fig. I d,e,f) Applied clay elements were fairly numerous in a form which may have represented hair or ornaments. (Fig. I m) Whether punctuations and incisions on the head represented a headdress is a debatable question, however, my opinion is that these were hair representations and I have marked headdress as being absent. Little evidence of dorsal decoration was found so I have reduced this characteristic to a rare classification. Dots used as a marking characteristic were present but very rare. The same was true for fingernail impressions and the schematized "backbone and rib" motif was absent at Cl-4.

In my opinion, the single, most important marking characteristic on the Lower Columbia is the use of the "wedge-shaped" impression. This was the most prevalent

(2) This probably includes figurines from McNary Res. to the Pacific Ocean, available for study prior to 1959.

method of marking, shown by the fact that over 50% of the figurines from Cl-4 and over 72% of those from Cl-6 were so marked. The impressions were so exceptionally similar in size and technique of production that the instrument used to produce them seemed to be of a specific form or natural shape. This type of marking appears to be diagnostic of the Lower Columbia area.

Two additional characteristics were observed, one apparently unique to this area. Small pieces of river mussel shell were inlaid into the wet clay as ornamentation or, in several cases, as a facial feature. (i.e. nose, Fig. Ij.) The other characteristic, while not unique, was the use of pigment which is uncommon. Red coloration of figurines was found on 5% of the specimens and black appears to have been used on one of the heads.

Up river and east of the Cascade Range is the Wakemap Round site which produced many clay figurines of types similar to those of Cl-4. Butler (1965) describes and pictures figurines which would not have been out of place if found at the Herzog site. Figurine heads (Type 1) from both sites have the same T-shaped brow, characteristic of the Columbia River and the wedge-shaped impressions appear in both sites.

Further up river at Miller's Island (Strong, 1930), the wedge-shaped impression again is present. At McNary Reservoir Osborne (1957a) reports a figurine with the

incised hair style of the type on bone and antler cremation figures. This clay figure was found in Burial 12. (Fig. 1d.) Above this part of the river and until we reach the domain of the Sanpoin and Nespelim, clay figurines seem not to exist or are unreported. Even in this upper Columbia region, clay was infrequent and difficult to locate. (Collier-Hudson-Ford, 1942)

Returning once more to Bryan and his suggested "Trans Cascadian area", the data presented in this paper seems to strengthen the possibility that this may be more than a "hunch".

SUMMARY

In summary, the known facts and data seem to indicate that the Lower Columbia figurine group is unrelated to any of the other major complexes and that figurines of Type 2 and 3 were of an independent development. This statement does not answer the question for Type 1 figurines which certainly have a greater range of possible origin. I have considered the possibility that the basic application of clay to figures was widespread and reached most of the West at an early date with a result that many of the later complexes had a similar basic beginning. Later development of distinctive forms was then the result of adaption to individual concepts of art, religious beliefs, rites and even toys as the particular culture saw fit to develop.

Large areas of the "lack of information" are still present and when these are brought to light for study, I'm sure the complete answer will be found. In any event, the Northwest, "a section of the country almost devoid of pottery", may someday look to the allied clay figurine as a cultural indicator.

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